

“Let's talk about migration”

Working Group on Migration Policies of the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE)

On November 7, the Parliament of the Canary Islands hosted the meeting of the CALRE Migration Working Group.

The meeting, which was held in private, was chaired by the President of the Chamber and the Group, Astrid Pérez, and was attended by the other presidencies of the European parliaments that are part of this group, and with the participation of experts in migration policies and International Law and the European Union.

The conference covered topics such as the future application of the Migration and Asylum Pact, policies for regulating and distributing migrants, and the role of Frontex in rescuing people. Under the title “*Let's Talk About Migration*”, the work program of the CALRE migration group included four presentations and two roundtable discussions.

The first one, titled *The implementation and future application of the Pact on Migration and Asylum in the context of the current situation of increasing migrant arrivals*, It was led by Joana Abrisketa Uriarte, professor of International Law and European Union Law at the University of Deusto.

The communication then took place *Policies regulating the transit and distribution of migrants in the European Union* by Claudia Maria Hofmann, Professor of Public Law and European Social Law at the European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder).

The role of FRONTEX in the rescue and salvage of people in danger at sea was led by Agustín Barroso Núñez, interim director of the Canary Islands Regional Coordination Centre (CCRC).

Finally, it was addressed *The Pact on Migration and Asylum and future possibilities of voluntary mechanisms for the distribution of migrants between Member States* by Carlos Fernández, advisor to the European Parliament for Borders, Migration and Asylum and negotiator of the European Pact on Migration and Asylum.

For their part, the round tables focused on *Management of the foster care of minors. Integration in the Canary Islands and Europe of minors who come from social and cultural environments different from the European one* which included the participation of Indira Carballo Padrón, a volunteer for Civil Protection in El Hierro and a host family of migrants; Cheikh Tidiane Diop, intercultural mediator and worker in a center of minors from the Mundo Nuevo Solidarity Association; Lucas A. Pérez Martín, professor of Private International Law at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria; and David Melián Castellano, a jurist specializing in children on the move.

The debate with the presidents of the European parliaments was attended by Marta Fernandez Martin (Aragon); Antonio Gazzellone (Lazio Italy); Luis Garcia (Azores); Maria Jose Gonzalez Revuelta (Cantabria); and Maria Visitacion Martinez (Murcia).

The meeting ended with a meeting of the presidents of the other European parliaments in order to gather the conclusions of the working group.

The conclusions presented below are the result of the start of a work plan which, on the part of the group's presidency, is sent to the rest of the members of the group to draw up new lines of work and address this situation jointly.

Below are the Main findings of this workday.

- The European Pact on Migration and Asylum is a means of harmonizing migration and asylum systems. The role of the European Commission is to negotiate the implementation of the Pact in each Member State. It is necessary to implement distribution policies with allocation mechanisms, as well as the return of those who do not have the right to asylum. The regulation establishes a mandatory and binding solidarity mechanism, while allowing for flexible contributions from Member States.
- In the specific case of the Canary Islands, the biggest problem is the lack of resources to deal with the arrival of unaccompanied minors on a route that has seen a significant increase in the number of migrants as well as their dangerousness. The joint responsibility of all territories is necessary to distribute all these minors and thus guarantee their well-being and future, without the services collapsing or the quality diminishing for the entire population.
- Migration regulation, especially the protection of minors, is essential for the growth of both this vulnerable population and society itself, promoting solidarity as a fundamental value.
- The reality of minors, especially unaccompanied minors, is very hard on arrival, and their reception and future integration are very important. It is necessary to facilitate their adaptation and entry into the labor market, which should be fundamental for the productive fabric of each country, without discrimination based on their origin. It is essential to achieve a legal system that facilitates this process.
- Frontex is an essential organization both for border surveillance and for supporting migration movements, seeking to regulate them but also to ensure their security. The primary objective is to introduce common standards for the management of external borders.

The aim of these conclusions is to make known the reality of the Canary Islands while encouraging the other members to present their own conclusions, concerns or topics to be discussed in future meetings of the working group. The following lines show a summary of the content that the experts presented at the conference to contextualize the reality of current migration.

Abstracts

The Canary Islands have become a crucial entry point for migrants arriving from countries such as Morocco, Senegal, Gambia or Mali. The situation is alarming, with an unprecedented migration crisis. In 2023, 39.910 migrants arrived, an increase of 154% compared to the previous year.

The number of vessels arriving at the islands has also increased significantly, from 350 in 2022 to 610 in 2023, and 506 by October 2024. However, this route has become extremely dangerous, being one of the deadliest in the world.

The situation of unaccompanied foreign minors in the Canary Islands is truly worrying. The islands are currently caring for nearly 6,000 of these minors, which represents half of all those who have arrived in Spain in the last year and a half.

To care for these minors, the number of centers available has doubled in just over a year. However, despite the commitment made to distribute migrants, the reality is that they have not been able to be transferred to other communities to their adaptation and integration. This highlights the urgent need for better coordination and support at national and European levels.

The European Pact on Migration and Asylum was approved in April 2024; a set of measures that represent the effort, by the European Community, to reach a common point on the reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). These measures aim to regulate the transit of migrants through European territory as well as establish a control system to prevent the *Asylum shopping* (Eurodac).

The Pact seeks to restore common reform and harmonization in EU migration policies. However, it is important to note that the Pact does not address migration in its entirety, as it does not include issues related to labor shortages or population ageing.

Policies to attract migrants for specific sectors fall under the competence of the States, although the need for coordination exists due to the Schengen area. The focus of the Pact is mainly on irregular migration. This Pact lays down the foundations for carrying out mechanisms of solidarity and equitable sharing of responsibilities between Member States, emphasizing the principle of

solidarity.

Through the General Regulation on Asylum and Migration (RGAM), the European Union is moving from a classic legislative role to a more active role in the implementation and coordination of asylum management policies for migrants. This regulation aims to encourage collaboration between states in order to have the necessary resources, both human and material and/or financial, as well as to ensure adequate coordination between the competent authorities.

To ensure the compatibility of these strategies, the European Commission must establish a common model. An "annual migration management cycle" is also being introduced, whereby the Commission will publish a report on the asylum and migration situation in the EU on an annual basis, serving as an early warning tool and providing strategic projections. The first report is scheduled to be published by 15 October 2025.

Key points of the new Pact on Migration and Asylum to highlight

1. Entry and distribution of asylum seekers. It aims to reduce secondary migration by clarifying criteria and rationalizing transfer rules.
2. Solidarity mechanism. The aim is to achieve a fairer distribution of asylum seekers within the European territory, with all Member States participating by relocating and/or financing the distribution.
3. Rights of asylum seekers and persons with international protection status. New regulations will focus on returning to their territory of origin those who do not have the right to remain in the EU, as well as on reducing the time taken for asylum procedures and ensuring that applicants meet the requirements to remain in any Member State.

In short, although the Pact is only a first step, it is an important step towards creating a Common European Asylum System that is fairer and more balanced, and that provides protection quickly and effectively to those who really need it.